



*This week we are exploring how we can grow in confidence as ministers for Jesus in our world. Confidence is a tricky thing for Christians to get right: the under-confident don't see their job or home life as a calling in the same way as that of a priest or missionary. The over-confident usually have issues with arrogance or hidden insecurities. Both become limited in their fruitfulness. How do we get it right? The answer relates to our sense of CALLING: when we are sure of the call of God on our lives, we become humbly confident, like Amos.*

### **Introduction to Amos**

By 760 BC the nation of Israel is divided into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The glory days of David, Solomon and the temple are over and a succession of evil kings have ruled in Israel and allowed ugly pagan practices into a travesty of their worship. The arts and commerce are flourishing but religion is a sham, there is no ethical background to the nation and the poor and the marginalised are suffering badly. God needs a man to be His mouthpiece to His beloved Israel, to call them back into relationship with Him. He chooses Amos, a humble shepherd living in the southern kingdom, in a tiny village just south of Bethlehem. **Read Amos 7: 10-17.** There are three encouragements we can take from Amos:

#### **1. Amos had no credentials. Verses 12-17**

- Vv. 12-13. Amaziah was an important priest from Bethel, the 'cathedral' in the northern kingdom. They had had enough of Amos prophesying against their way of life so Amos was ordered to go back to little Judah and leave them alone in Bethel – 'the king's sanctuary, the temple of the kingdom.'
- Vv. 14-15. Amos is not intimidated, he stands firm in his ministry although he has no human justifications:
  - He wasn't born a prophet, nor fathered by one. He was a shepherd & looked after fig trees.
  - It was the LORD, Yahweh Himself who told him to leave his sheep and prophesy to Israel.
- Vv. 16-17. Confident in the source of his authority, Amos delivers yet another diatribe for Amaziah.
- We can all have a list of excuses for not being ready to speak up for our faith. For Amos, it was nothing to do with his credentials, it was all about the Almighty God who chose, sent and gifted him.

#### **2. There is no account of Amos' "Call".**

- Most prophets start with a long and detailed account of the encounter with God that confirmed their calling and their ministry: **Isaiah 6** and the angels, **Jeremiah 1** and his reluctance and God's insistence
- Amos tells us nothing of his calling: he just rests on the authority of God; no explanation necessary.
- Amos shows us it is perfectly possible to be mighty without having the world's best story about ourselves and reminds us to look for mighty faith among ordinary Christians going about their daily lives.

#### **3. God gave Amos courage in adversity.**

- Amos' calling wasn't easy – he had to leave his geographical comfort zone and go north with a tough message to a tough audience. He has to tell the people that their money, security, comfort and even religion were not going to save them. They had to turn away from idolatry and oppressing the poor.
- Predictably, Amos is attacked and misrepresented, his motives questioned and his message ignored.
- But he perseveres and so can we, knowing that faith as small as a mustard seed is all that is needed for us to respond with confidence to our call to be God's image-bearer in the world.

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#### **Questions for discussion**

- 1. Giving yourselves marks out of ten, what would you score for your confidence in God's call on your life?***
- 2. What excuses do we make for counting ourselves inadequate as ambassadors for Jesus?***
- 3. What can we take from verses 14-15 to help us when we are being intimidated by a non-believer?***
- 4. Do we ever feel inferior in comparison with other Christians' credentials or with their experiences?***
- 5. Can we think of someone who lives a very ordinary life in an extraordinary way – shining for Jesus?***
- 6. What might be the price we have to pay to respond to God's call on our lives?***
- 7. Have we ever thought of ourselves as having a calling? Are we confident of who we are in Christ?***